

Middlesex County
One Stop Operations/ Workfirst Collaborative
June 27, 2013
1:30pm

County of Middlesex
Office of Workforce Development
550 Jersey Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
WIA Conference Room B

Attendees: Jane Brady, Baden Almonor, Jacqueline Blake-Jones, LaKesha Brantley, MaryAnn Connors, Janice Fishbein, Sherri Goldberg, Maria Gonzalez, Adrienne Keaton, Miriam Ruiz, John Ross, Charles Stovalle, Michelle Suskind, Timothy Timberlake, Linda Urbach, Sandra Woods,

Staff: Helina K. Wisniewski, Secretary

Adrienne Keaton called the meeting to order at 1:40 pm.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 28, 2013 One Stop Operations Committee were presented for approval. John Ross made a motion for the approval of the minutes of the March 28, 2013 meeting. Janice Fishbein seconded and the motion carried.

UI Issues – Adrienne Keaton

Carla Ghee was unable to attend the meeting as the New Brunswick UI office was short staffed due to staff leaving or being transferred to other locations. The Adjudication Department of UI was scheduled to move out of the New Brunswick One Stop as of June 28.

There will be a reduction of UI benefits for claimants who are on extensions with the week ending July 6, 2013. Currently, the initial UI claim is for 26 weeks, and the maximum someone can collect is \$624 per week. There are four extensions after the initial UI claim: Tier 1 – 14 weeks; Tier 2 – 14 weeks; Tier 3 – 9 weeks and Tier 4 – 10 weeks.

As of June 30, 2013, anyone who is on an extension after the initial 26 week claim will have their benefits reduced by 22.2%. Claimants that call in on July 6, 2013 to certify their benefits will be advised that their benefits will be reduced. In the beginning of June, letters were sent to 113,300 UI claimants informing them of the reduction in benefits and surprisingly, only 300 people called to question it. All UI extensions (Emergency Unemployment Compensation, or EUC) are federally funded. The reason for the reduction is due to Sequestration. UI claimants may not appeal the decision to reduce their benefits. However, if they feel an error was made in calculating the amount of the reduction, they may file an appeal.

The Call Centers are still open to accept inquiries regarding UI. Generally, the Call Centers stop answering the phones around 1:00 or 1:30 pm due to the high volume of calls received. They call back people that have left messages within 24 hours, making three attempts to return the call. Calls made from courtesy phones in the One Stops receive higher priority to be answered, than those made from a home phone.

Ron Marino of NJDLWD was notified on Friday, June 21, 2013 that the fourth extension of UI that lasts ten weeks will be eliminated effective July 13, 2013. Notices will be sent out to those UI claimants who are on

Tier 2 and Tier 3 advising them of the change. Also, FAQs regarding this issue will be on the NJDLWD website.

WIA Funding PY' 2013 - Adrienne Keaton

Overall, the WIA funding level for PY'2013 is \$5,099,371 - Adult - \$1,306,632; Dislocated Worker - \$2,223,810 and Youth - \$1,568,929. Between the three categories this is an increase of \$459,460 over the amount we received for PY'2012.

Middlesex County received the second highest WIA allocation in the State. Passaic received the highest allocation. Newark was third and Atlantic/Cape May was fourth.

The REA2 Orientation given at the Middlesex County College Edison campus, and other county colleges campuses across the State, resumed in April after being suspended in the fall due to Hurricane Sandy. REA2 provides an overview of the various services available to job seekers through NJDLWD. Everyone who is on a UI extension is required to go to this three hour program. It is hoped that we will see some referrals to training as a result of this program being reinstated.

We have been promoting the Online Career Beacon which is the training portion of the One Stop Orientation that was moved from an in person orientation to online, last summer. As of April, 2013 we started scheduling one in person Career Beacon each month in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy for those people who don't have computers or feel more comfortable meeting face to face with a counselor.

Literacy/Learning Links - Jane Brady

Unfortunately, we haven't received any notice of funding for the Learning Links for Program Year 2013 as yet. Technically, on July 1, 2013 the two Learning Links located in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy should be shut down. We will take money from different accounts and then return it to the Learning Link account once we receive the funding from the State. The State budget was passed, but we don't know at this time if it included funding for the Learning Links.

We recently interviewed a candidate for the New Brunswick Learning Link who was hired to start on July 29, 2013. Patrick Barry who works at the Perth Amboy Learning Link is leaving and was hired at Middlesex County College as of July 1, 2013. We will be replacing him also.

There is a possibility we may be offering Intensive ESL Classes to our participants. It has been brought to our attention, that some people who have been educated in foreign countries and the United States as well, do not have the communication and verbal skills to effectively work in the United States. Mrs. Brady has been in communication with Brian Loughlin, Superintendent of Middlesex County Vocational & Technical High Schools and will be meeting with him during the first week of July to discuss the possibility of running an intensive ESL class four or five times a year, for 3 or 4 weeks at a time. Also, we hope to run a Basic Computer Literacy Class for 2 weeks at a time. We have to find an available computer lab in order to be able to hold these classes.

Hurricane Sandy NEG - Jane Brady

The NEG Grant was extended to the end of December, 2013. More people can be employed for this grant, but not the same people who are currently employed. If someone has reached their sixth month of working in either the Woodbridge or Carteret NEG they can't continue to work. They have to be laid off. Woodbridge is looking for another ten people who must reside in Woodbridge to pick up where the last eight people were laid off. The individuals must be unemployed, not receiving government assistance and want

to do pure physical labor. It's temporary work with no benefits and pays \$15.00 an hour. They would have to be hired by Woodbridge.

Advanced Manufacturing NEG - Adrienne Keaton

The U.S. Department of Labor announced \$58,000,000.00 in National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds was released to assist 30 states in increasing their capacity to provide training to dislocated workers that will result in them acquiring an industry recognized credential that will enable them to obtain a good job. The grants will run from June 26, 2013 to June 30, 2015.

These grants will focus on providing training to dislocated workers who are long-term unemployed and Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients who have been profiled as likely to exhaust their benefits, as job search and other intensive services provided through American Job Centers has not been enough to help these individuals return to the labor force.

The NJDLWD was awarded \$2,500,000 in Dislocated Worker National Emergency Grant funding to train people in order to provide Training-on-Demand certifications and placement in advanced manufacturing occupations for NJ's long term unemployed (27 weeks or more). The proposal was based on a training model developed over the past two years by New Jersey's metal fabrication employers and NJ's Consortium of Community Colleges for a 12 week training program in metal fabrication. .

Forty-seven percent of New Jersey's allocation will be directed to training at \$6,000 per participant. The training will be delivered primarily by the New Jersey Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development (NJCCCWED or the Consortium). Eighty percent of this funding will be contracted to the Consortium as a project grantee. The balance of the training funds will allow for alternative training deliverables (class size or individual training accounts) to ensure maximum flexibility in meeting employer's needs. Forty-three percent of the allocation will be set aside for workplace training which includes either On-the-Training (OJT) or tuition for registered apprentices. At the end of training participants will be placed at a minimum starting salary of \$12.00 per hour, or nearly \$25,000 annually.

NJDLWD hopes to train 195 people across the State over the two year period. Funding for 144 people will be set aside for OJT, in addition to the money for classroom training. OJT funds will be available for up to \$7,500 per person. Participants can be trained in both classroom training and OJT, which means that over \$13,000 will be available for one individual who is enrolled in training through this grant.

Job Fairs - Jane Brady

Two highly successful job fairs were held by the WIB this year:

- Thursday, March 14, 2013
Radisson Hotel, 21 Kingsbridge Road, Piscataway
- Tuesday, May 14, 2013
Woodlot Park Recreation Building, 124 New Road, Monmouth Junction

Job Fairs scheduled in the future are as follows:

- July 16, 2013 – Robert N. Wilentz Elementary School, 51 1st Street, Perth Amboy
- September 26, 2013 - Recreation Center, Municipal Complex located on Rt. 516, Old Bridge
- October 9, 2013 - Rutgers Labor Education Bldg, Ryders Lane, New Brunswick

We no longer accept Real Estate offices or any entities that only pay using the 1099 form for their employees. The state has ruled that employers we register to attend job fairs must pay their employees using W-2 forms.

WorkFirst Update – John Ross

The Notice of Obligation for State Fiscal Year 2014 for Work First allotments was received on June 10, 2013. The funding levels for most categories remained the same with a slight increase in TANF Case Management and Work Activities for both TANF and GA/SNAP. Needs Based Funding (\$50,000), which was used in the past to supplement transportation of Work First participants was not included this year as upfront funding. A request has already been forwarded to secure these funds. The basis used for allocations this year was (75%) total case load counts for TANF and GA/SNAP per the records of the Division of Family Development and (25%) average number of clients in WFNJ or Staff Assisted activities.

Agreements between Middlesex County and the WFNJ Vendors (MCC and NBALC) for PY-2013 commencing July 1, 2013 and ending June 30, 2014 are scheduled for approval by the Board of Freeholders on July 18, 2013. The Board previously approved funding for the month of July to allow continuation of Programs pending approval for the full year. The Contracts with both Vendors are within 5% of the funding levels for the previous year.

The TANF Participation Rate remains unacceptable. While many of the causes are not within the control of the Board of Social Services and the One Stop such as Medical and Domestic Violence Deferrals, pre-sanction/sanctioned clients and unbudgeted employed, there are continued efforts to encourage clients to continue to participate fully and resolve barriers that prevent such.

Middlesex County College and New Brunswick Adult Learning Center commenced special programs to provide instruction for WFNJ clients who possessed limited or no computer skills. The importance of such is related to the essential needs of conducting comprehensive job search activities. The response has been very positive and indicative of the need to continue this program in the future. The funds utilized to fund these efforts were surplus funds existing in both Vendors' budgets due to turnover and of vacancies. This need will continue to be a high priority when funds are available in the future.

The Transportation Block Grant for TANF participants will continue to be funded at the same level as previous years. This Grant only provides funds for transportation of TANF clients in WFNJ Activities. The County of Middlesex has been providing this transportation for GA clients in the past but serious questions remain unresolved at the present time for PY 2013. The cost of this transportation has increased significantly while the sources of funds available to the County have decreased. The County has confirmed that transportation for GA clients will continue for July, 2013. The Board of Social Services is preparing contingency plans for GA clients in the event that the transportation is reduced or eliminated.

The Board of Social Services reports that there have been some difficulties with the quality of the printing on transportation reimbursements for WFNJ clients. Efforts are ongoing to resolve this problem.

Open Discussion/Other Business

- Michelle Suskind, Community Child Care Solutions - Preschool Summer Enrichment and Literacy Program - 8-10 week summer program for 3 – 5 year olds, has openings. There is no waiting list. A flyer was distributed.
- Jane Brady – We served over 500 WIA Adults and Dislocated Workers for this program year with the help of our Career Development Counselors and Supervisors. Congratulations to the Operations Staff. Youth Program – we served 175 Out-of-School youth.
- Sandra Woods, Easter Seals New Jersey – They had 45 jobs available and now that number has increased to 79 jobs for seniors. They will work 34 hours a week at \$7.25 per hour. As of August, the hours will be reduced to 15.
- Lakesha Brantley, Edison Job Corps – There will be a Networking Luncheon on Tuesday, September 10th, 2013 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at Edison Job Corps in Edison, NJ. A flyer was distributed.
- Sherri Goldberg, Jewish Renaissance Foundation – The agency serves 16-24 year olds out-of-school youth for six months giving them vocational and academic support with the hope they pass their GED at the end of their six months. There is a success rate academically of 84% for the students who complete the program. The GED Academic component will run for four months instead of six months and will be serving 18-25 year olds. There was difficulty in serving 16 year olds so they decided to change the age. The youth will receive their GED, Academic Support, Computer Skills, Financially Literacy, Job Search Skills and Life Skills. They are opening a Construction Apprenticeship Program for those who have their GED. They will receive a stipend to attend on a daily basis and earn project fees. Tutoring will be offered to anyone in the community.

There will be a 6th Employment Boot camp Workshop on Tuesday, July 30, 2013 at Delaney Recreation Center, 701 Chamberlain Avenue, Perth Amboy, from 6 pm to 9 pm.

- Charles Stovall, OJT – A report indicated the number one thing employers are looking for is Soft Skills in individuals. We should concentrate a little more to make sure people understand what Soft Skills are before entering employment.
- Adrienne Keaton – Due to a promotion in our agency, a Career Development Counselor position is open. It requires a Bachelor's degree, 15 credits in vocational guidance or related courses, and 1 year experience in a counseling related area. The salary is \$35,000.

Adjournment

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 26, 2013 at 1:30pm at 550 Jersey Avenue, WIA Conference Room B. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Information/Handout Distributed to Members

- Flyers from Community Child Care Solutions
- Flyers from Edison Job Corps